Joint Council of Vacational Education (JCVE) under the Chairmanship of Union Education Minister has been set up at the national level to ensure proper planning and coordination of the vocational programmes. A Central Institute for Vocational Education has been established in Bhopal as a national apex level research and development organisation for Vocational Education. A new Scheme of Pre-Vocational Education at Lower Secondary stage has been introduced during the current year. Sixty subject fields have been covered under the Apprentices Act to enable the students to avail of the benefit under the Apprenticeship Scheme. The recruitment rules for Group 'C' and 'D' posts are being reviewed to make vocational pass-outs eligible for employment in Government/Quasi Government jobs.

Discovery of Gold by Chitradurga Copper Company in Karnataka

188. SHRI H. HANUMANTHAPPA: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Chitradurga Copper Company in Karnataka has found gold alongwith copper;

(b) what is the percentage of gold and whether it can be explored further; and

(c) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI BALRAM SINGH YADAV): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Hutti Gold Mines Co. Ltd. (HGML), an undertaking of State Government of Karnataka, which owns Chitradurga Copper Mine in Karnatika, has reported that prelifminary analysis of some samples indicates that gold in copper ore varies from 0.1 to 15.60 gms/ton. HGML has indicated the need for further exploration.

Production of Copper

189. DR. NAUNIHAL SINGH: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the country is likely to face maximum shortfall in the production of copper as regards the non-ferrous metals industry is concerned;

(b) if so, the likely gap in demand-supply of copper in the country and by when self-sufficiency is likely to be achieved;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the indigenous production, as of today, only meets 30 per cent of the demand in the country; if so, in what manner the balance demand would be met;

(d) whether Government are aware that the indigenous production of copper is likely to be almost static and the reasons therefor; and

(e) what steps Government have taken or propose to take for copper exploration and expansion of existing mine and smelting capacity with details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MIINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI BALRAM SINGH YADAV): (a) to (c) Hindustan Copper Limited (HCL) is the only Central Government Public Sector Undertaking engaged in mining and production of primary copper metal in the country. The indigenous production of refined copper meets about 30—35% of the demand of copper in the country. With the available and known ore reserves, it is not possible to be sufficient in copper through indigenous production in the near future. The gap between the demand and the indigenous production is met through imports which are allowed freely under the current import policy.

(d) The indigenius production of primary copper metal is not likely to improve due to poor grade of ore, limited known reserves of copper ore in the country, low scale of operations, high input costs, etc.

(e) Geological Survey of India (GSI), a Subordinate Office of Ministry of Mines is responsible for regional exploratiin for minerals and Mineral Exploration Corporation Ltd. (MECL), a Central Government Public Sector Undertaking under the administrative control of Ministry of Mines is

responsible for the detailed exploration for minerals. The foreign Consultants are also engaged from time to time, if need be, for exploration of minerals. MECL is presently carrying out detailed exploration for copper around Khetri Copper deposit in Rajasthan. M/s Robertson Research, Australia and M/s Bishimetal Exploration Co. Ltd., Japan were engaged for carrying out of the detailed exploration for copper in Singhbhum copper belt in Bihar and Malanjkhand Copper belt in Madhya Pradesh respectively. HCL has conceived a plan to expand the capacity of its existing smelter at Khetri Copper Complex, Rajasthan from 31,000 tpa to 1 lakh tpa and also copper mines at Surda and Rakha in Eastern Region and Kolihan in Western Region to augment production of copper.

Expansion Programmes of Malanjkhand and Khetri Projects of HCL

190. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD : Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the public sector Hindustan Copper Limited has been scouting for overseas investors for its Malanjkhand and Khetri expansion projects;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the HCL plans have suffered a set-back due to import liberalisation and steep fall in internitional copper prices ; and

(c) if so, whether Government would consider lending HCL adequate budgetory support atleast for the proposed Malanjkhand integrated project for its being in the core industrial sector ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI BALRAM SINGH YADAV) : (a) and (b) Due to steep fall in international copper prices, the financial health of the Hindustan Copper Limited (HCL), the sole indigenous producer of primary copper in the country, has been affected. Therefore, the company has been looking for financial assistance for implementation of its various schemes. A review of expansion schemes indicates that the setting up of a smelter at Malanjkhand based on indigenous copper concentrates is not presently viable. However, expansion of existing Smelter at KCC with imported concentrates is considered economically viable and accordingly, this project has been assigned priority.

(c) In view of the reply in respect of Malanjkhand Copper Project given above question does not arise.

Investment by Multinational Companies in Minerals

191. MISS. SAROJ KHAPARDE : Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that multinational companies are keen on investing on minerals in India ; and

(b) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTERY OF MINES (SHRI BALRAM SINGH YADAV) : (a) and (b) The National Mineral Policy placed before this House on 5-3-1993 liberalises further the conditions pertaining to foreign investment in the mining sector has generated interest amongst foreign mining companies. Effect of these will show after consequential amendments to the Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957, have been made.

Illegal Mining of Precious Stones

192. SHRI G. G. SWELL : Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that large quantities of precious stones (cat's eye, garnet, rubies, diamonds) are being illegally mined in Koderma district of Bihar and Kalahandi and Bolangir districts of Orissa ;

(b) whether these precious stones found their way to Punjab, Rajasthan and abroad ; and

(c) whether it is also a fact that the Geological Survey of India failed to notice the existence of these precious stones in these districts, if so, the details thereof ?